THE FEET IN SALAAT

A SALAFI ERROR

BY

MAJLIS UL ULAMA

SOUTH AFRICA

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Below is a booklet published by the Mujlisul Ulama of South Africa regarding the Feet in Salaat and the errors the Salafis have brought into this. It has been taken from their excellent website, where you can also find other books, Insha'allah. The link is at the end of the document, Insha'allah.

Introduction

In this fourteenth century of the Islamic era, a recently mushroomed sect known as the Salafis, has invented some new rules which they believe are the Sunnat teachings of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). Inspite of their views being in conflict with the teachings of the Salf-e-Saaliheen belonging to the Noblest Ages of Islam (Khairul Quroon), they obstinately cling to their misguided opinions. Their method is to subject the Ahadith to their personal understanding. Inspite of the divergence which this self-opinion produces from the Way of the Ummah inherited from the Sahaabah, the Salafis intransigently cling to their deviation.

A little reflection would convince them that it is not possible that the Aimmah-e-Mujtahideen who were the Students of the Sahaabah would propagate acts which are in conflict with the Sunnah. Any act which has been accepted and practised by the entire Ummah from the earliest era of Islam cannot be deviation. Deviation will be the act which is in conflict with this sacred Unanimity.

One of the erroneous practices of the Salafis is their act of spreading their legs wide apart during Salaat. In the bid to touch the toes of the musalli standing adjacent to them, they disfigure their stance and ruin their composure with the mental preoccupation of touching the toes of the musallis standing on both sides in the Saff during Jamaat Salaat. Even when performing Salaat alone, they stretch the legs hideously apart. But for this innovation they have absolutely no Shar'i evidence. A solitary Hadith which makes reference to 'foot with foot' has been grievously misunderstood and misinterpreted by them. Besides their misinterpretation, they have intentionally ignored all the other Shar'i proofs which refute their interpretation.

A perusal of the relevant Ahadith on this subject will convince every unbiased Muslim that the Salafi interpretation of the Hadith is a concoction of the nafs. It is a concoction designed and prepared by shaitaan to create rifts and discord in the Ummah. When people opt to abandon the practices which the Aimmah Mujtahideen have reported on the basis of the authority of the Sahaabah, then shaitaani manipulation is evident.

All four Math-habs of the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah unanimously refute the Salafi contention on the position to be adopted when standing for Salaat. None of the Math-habs teaches that the legs should be

spread out widely when standing for Salaat nor that the toes of the Musalli alongside should be touched. Some of the Salafis go to great lengths in spreading their legs in the bid to touch the next man's toes causing annoyance and much irritation.

The Emphasis on Straghtening the Sufoof

(Sufoof is the plural of saff which refers to the row of musallis in a Jamaat)

The Ahadith of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) emphasise the straightening of the sufoof. The emphasis in all the Hadith narrations dealing with this subject is directed to proper saff*-formation, not on the feet of the musallis touching the toes of the musalli standing alongside as the Salafis inordinately and inconsiderately practice.

In the endeavour to sustain the practice of stretching the legs wide open while performing Salaat, the Salafis have gone to the extreme of adopting this ugly stance even when performing Salaat alone. While a man who is uneducated in the laws of the Shariah may misunderstand the solitary Hadith in which reference has been made to foot with foot, the same mistake cannot and should not be made in so far as Salaat performed alone because the question of foot with foot is not remotely related to infiraadi Salaat, i.e. performing Salaat alone.

The Salafis may abortively argue that the aim of spreading the legs wide apart is to ensure straightness of the sufoof, but what argument do they have for justifying this unbecoming practice when a man is performing Salaat infiraadan(individually)? Furthermore, there is no Hadith narration in this regard which could even be misinterpreted to support the case of a munfarid stretching his legs to the extremities of east and west or north and south, depending on the location of the Qiblah from where he happens to be.

The Salafis claim that it is Sunnah to stretch the legs wide apart and for a musalli's toes to touch the toes of the musalli standing alongside him in the saff. This ludicrous position is imposed by the Salafis on even women who are obliged to stand with their legs wide open. What an ugly, miserable and immodest stance for a woman to adopt? A woman is an object of concealment according to the statement of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). When she has to stretch her legs wide open, she adopts the stance of lewd and shameless women. Throughout Salaat, a woman's postures are to be constricted — made small and drawn in, not asserted like a man asserts and expresses his actions during Salaat.

As far as their stance is concerned for the munfarid, there is not a single Hadith which they can cite in substantiation for their view which anyhow is utterly baseless. All the relevant Ahadith on this topic teach the

contrary, namely, that the feet should be held slightly apart — about four to five inches (10 cm). There also exists consensus of the Four Math-habs on this issue.

As far as the feet position for the saff is concerned, the Salafis conveniently overlook all the Ahadith which negate their corrupt view and intransigently cling to a view which they have understood to be the method. In taking to this view, they deliberately cast aside what exactly the Hadith in question says. They took a single word (namely 'foot with foot') out of the context of the Hadith and formulated the practice of stretching the legs wide apart and touching the toes of the musallis standing alongside on either side in the saff. For understanding this issue, it is best that we cite all the relevant Ahadith.

The Ahadith

1. Hadhrat Umar (radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: Straighten the sufoof, line up the shoulders, close the gaps and become tender in the hands of your brothers. Do not leave any gaps for shaitaan. Whoever joins the saff, Allah will join him. And whoever cuts the saff Allah will cut him. (Bukhari & Abu Dawood)

[Become tender: that is to comply when a brother musalli in the saff touches your shoulder indicating that you should bring it in line with the shoulders of the other musallis in the saff.]

2. Hadhrat Baraa' Bin Aazib (radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) used to enter the saff from end to end, touching our chests and our shoulders. He would say:

Do not be irregular (in your rows), for then your hearts will become irregular (i.e. discord will overtake you).
He would (also) say:

Verily, Allah Azza Wa Jal and His Malaaikah dispatch Salaam on the first sufoof

[When the word 'Salaat' is related to Allah Ta 'ala, it denotes Rahmat, i.e. He sends down mercy. When it is related to the Malaaikah, it means that they supplicate to Allah Ta`ala to send His mercy upon His servants.]

3. Hadhrat Anas Bin Maalik (radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that the Iqaamah for Salaat was given. Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) turned towards us and said: Straighten your sufoof and stand close together, for verily I see you from behind. In a narration of Hadhrat Anas (radhiyallahu anhu) it is mentioned: Everyone among us would put his shoulder with the shoulder of his companion (alongside) and his foot with his foot.

4. Hadhrat Anas (radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: Join your sufoof and stand close together, and stand in line with (your) necks. I take oath by The Being in Whose power is my life that most certainly I see shaitaan entering the gaps in the saff as if he is a lamb. (Abu Dawood)
5. Abul Qaasim Jadli (rahmatullah alayh) said :I heard Nu'maan Bin Basheer (radhiyallahu anhu) say: 'Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) turned towards the people (the musallis) and say three times: 'By Allah! Most certainly, you should straighten your sufoof otherwise Allah will create discord in your hearts.' Thereafter I saw that a man would attach his shoulder to the shoulder of his companion (the one standing alongside), his knee to the knee of his companion and his ankle to the ankle of his companion. (Bukhari & Abu Dawood)
6. Nu'maan Bin Basheer (radhiyallahu anhu) narrates: Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) would arrange (set in order) our sufoof. One day he came out (from his home) and saw a man (in the saff) whose chest was protruding in front of the (chests of) the community (i.e. the musallis). He then commented: 'Straighten your sufoof otherwise Allah will cast discord in your faces (i.e. in the words coming from your mouths). (Tirmizi)
7. Maalik Ibn Abi Aamir Ansaari (radhiyallahu anhu) narrates: Uthmaan Bin Affaan (radhiyallahu anhu) would recite in his Khutbah: 'When the Salaat is ready, arrange the sufoof properly and line up with the shoulders' (i.e. the shoulders of the musallis should all be in line and touching). (Muatta Imaam Muhammad)
8. Hadhrat Anas (radhiyallahu anhu) narrated that Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: Join your sufoof and draw close among yourselves and line up with the necks. Reported by Abu Dawood and Nisai. Authenticated by Ibn Hibbaan. (Bulooghul Maraam)–*I'laaus Sunnan

These are about all the narrations pertaining to the manner and style of standing in Jamaat Salaat. Explaining these Ahadith, Imaam Bukhaari (rahmatullah alayh) states in the section captioned:

JOINING SHOULDER TO SHOULDER:

This is what the Jamhoor have said: 'Verily, the meaning (of joining in this context) is complete nearness and lining up, not actual joining (or touching).' Al-Haafiz said: The meaning of this is to emphasise in straightening the saff and closing the gaps. And Aini too has said so. With this, the indication is towards emphasis in straightening the sufoof and closing the gaps. Qustulaani and others have also said this.

(Laamiud Duraari commentary of Bukhari)

In Faidhul Baari it is reported as follows:

It is stated in Sharhul Wiqaayah: ‘The musalli should stand apart (with his feet) so that there is a distance of four fingers in between them, and that is also the view of Imaam Shaafi (rahmatullah alayh), In another view it is said that the distance (between the feet) should be one hand (i.e. about 10 cm).’ (The author says): I did not find any difference of opinion among the Salf (i.e. Salf-e-Saaliheen) between the stance (of the musalli) in Jama’ah and in infiraad (i.e. performing alone). There is no difference regarding the gap (between the feet). It is not that the spreading of the feet should be more in Jama’ah than when performing Salaat alone.

The summary of this is: When we do not find the Sahaabah and the Taabi-een differentiating in their standing position between Jama’ah and individual Salaat, then we understand that the only meaning of Rasulullah’s statement of ‘joining the shoulders’ is to line up closely and to abstain from leaving gaps (between the musallis).

The following appears in Laamiud Duraari, Commentary of Saheeh Bukhaari:

The Authorities (the Fuqaha) stated that it is best for the musalli to keep his feet about four fingers apart. They did not say that the feet should be united in ruku’ or sajdah. Aini says in Binaayah: ‘It is appropriate that there be the distance of four fingers between the feet of the musalli, for verily, this is nearest to khushoo.’

Ibn Umar (radhiyallahu anhuma) would not spread (widely) his feet nor would the one foot touch the other, but between this there would be neither much closeness nor much distance.

In Raddul Mihtaar it is reported as follows:

The meaning of joining ankles to ankles is that everyone in the Jama’ah should stand alongside the other (i.e. in a straight line). So is it said in Fataawa Samarqand). (I’laaus Sunan)

From all the narrations and views of the Muhadditheen and Fuqaha of the Khairul Quroon era it is abundantly clear that the Hadith which mentions joining foot with foot does not have a literal meaning. It simply means that the feet should be all in line, and this is achieved by the heels of the musallis all being in the same line. This will ensure a straight saff on which the emphasis of all the Ahadith is.

The Salafis

The Salafis of this age, while grabbing the words ‘foot with foot’, ignore ‘neck with neck’, ‘shoulder with shoulder’, ‘knee with knee’ and ‘ankle with ankle’. The narrations command joining of the necks just as it instructs joining of the feet. And, in the same way it commands joining of the knees and ankles. How is it possible for the neck of one musalli to touch the neck of the musalli alongside? At most, shoulders can touch. But to achieve the phenomenal act of joining necks, the musallis will have to ruin their Salaat and stand on their toes balancing at a precarious angle to achieve the goal of touching each other’s neck. But no one has ever advocated this ludicrous stance. Similarly, if the literal sense of the ‘ankle with ankle’ has to be accepted, it will place the musallis under great stress to achieve what is not simple because the protruding heels are barriers for this achievement. Also, if ‘knee against knee’ had to be literally considered, the musallis would have to stand with ugly bandied legs, stretching even their thighs hideously in order to join their knees with the knees of their companions? But, not even the Salafis have ventured such ludicrousness.

Why do the Salafis choose only ‘foot with foot’ out of the several instructions pertaining to the joining of various bodily parts? For this choice they have only their intransigent nafsaani desire –no daleel whatsoever. What is the determining factor to choose only feet and to ignore necks, knees, shoulders and ankles? On the other hand, the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama’ah — the followers of the Four Math-habs — *have a mass of evidence to support ‘joining of the shoulders’. Furthermore, joining or lining up of the shoulders is simple, rational and fulfills in the best way the instruction of straightening the saff.

It should be noted that the emphasis is on closing the gaps. There should be no gap between two musallis standing in the saff. But, the wider the legs are spread apart, the more the distance between the shoulders will increase. Thus, spreading the legs wide apart defeats the very command issued in the Hadith to close the gaps and straighten the sufoof.

In order to achieve ‘foot with foot’ literally, the Salafis are constrained to turn their feet at angles away from the Qiblah. In this hideous exercise they manage only to touch the toes of the adjacent musalli with much difficulty and irritation to those whose peace of mind is disturbed with the unruly encroachment of his companion’s toes. When the toes are made to touch with the feet in diagonal positions, the shoulders cannot touch, the knees, ankles, necks, etc. are thrown completely out of alignment.

When shoulders are not lined up, it is impossible to achieve straight sufoof. It is for this reason that the Hadith emphasises more on shoulders. Feet are mentioned only once. The Sahaabah and the Taabi-een relate the instruction ‘to line up’ and straighten the saff to the shoulders, necks, knees, ankles and the feet. In other words, all these should be in line, not out of alignment. It is for this reason that the Hadith clearly

mentions that the Khulafa-e-Raashideen, in fact Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) himself, would order protruding chests to recede into line. Never did any of the Authorities of the Shariah speak about feet which should touch.

In the adoption of the Salafi mode, the movement is excessive in Salaat. Neither is proper Ruku' nor proper Sajdah possible if this hideous posture has to be retained throughout Salaat. In fact Sajdah is not at all possible with the feet spread wide apart. Therefore, the Salafis are constrained to shift positions repeatedly when going to ruku'. This excessive movement in Salaat in negatory of khushoo'.

THE FOUR MATH-HABS

While the case of the Four Math-habs is logical, the actual daleel (proof) for our view is not rational interpretation, but is narrational evidence. Such evidence has been transmitted down the centuries from the Sahaabah. It should be understood that the Aimmah-e-*Mujtahideen — the Imaams of the Math-habs — had acquired their knowledge of Islam from either the Sahaabah or the Taabi-een who were the Students of the Sahaabah. Whatever they taught is therefore, what the Sahaabah had instructed. It is the height of folly and deviation to differ with them and to choose a way which is at variance with what they had disseminated.

It is not conceivable that the Salf-e-Saaliheen — all the Imaams of the Math-bas were among them — were in deviation and the present-day Salafis are on Rectitude. This is unacceptable to any Muslim who is prepared to reflect a bit. The greatest daleel for the view of the Math-habs is that whatever they teach has been acquired directly from either the Sahaabah or the Taabi-een.

The Salafi practice of spreading the feet wide apart and the irritating attempt to touch the next man's toes are in conflict with the Sunnah as the aforegoing Shar'i evidences have established.

Conclusion

1. According to the Hambali Math-hab there should be a 'small' gap between the feet of the musalli.

2. According to the Maaliki Math-hab, the distance should be moderate, neither together nor so wide apart which is considered repugnant.

3. According to the Shaafi Math-hab, the gap between the feet should be one hand. It is Makrooh to spread the feet wider than this.

4. According to the Hanafi Math-hab, the distance between the feet should be four fingers.

This is the Sunnah and the Way of the Salf-e-Saaliheen. The Salafis have no authority from the Salf-e-Saaliheen to substantiate its view of bid'ah.

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By Mujlisul Ulama of South Africa

P.O. Box 3393

Port Elizabeth, 6056

• Manner of standing in the rows of the *jama`ah*

- **Shaikh Muhammad Ilyas FaisalMadinat al-Munawwara**

It is established from several *ahadith* that the row should be absolutely straight and no gaps should be left between the worshippers. However, some people insist on spreading their feet and standing in such a manner that their ankles touch the ankles of their neighbour. What is the reality of standing in this fashion?

Those who stand in this way base their practice upon a *hadith* narrated by Nu'maan bin Basheer *(radhiallahu anhu*). He says: "Once Rasulullah (*sallallahu alaihi wasallam*) faced us and said: "Straighten your rows". He repeated this thrice. He then said: "By Allah, you must most certainly straighten your rows or else Allah Ta'ala will disunite your hearts". Hazrat Nu'maan bin Basheer (*radhiallahu anhu*) says: "I then saw the people joining together their shoulders and ankles". [*Abu Dawood, Sahih ibn Khuzaima*]

The concluding statement of Hazrat Nu'maan (*radhiallahu anhu*) is also reported in *Sahih Bukhari*.

However, upon analysing this *hadith*, several points come to light: **Firstly**, Rasulullah (*sallallahu alaihi wasallam*) never commanded the joining of the ankles. No *hadith* has yet been found wherein Rasulullah (*sallallahu alaihi wasallam*) himself instructed the *Sahaaba* (*radhiallahu anhu*) to join their ankles. The Sahaaba (*radhiallahu anhu*) had themselves adopted this manner in order to fulfil the command of straightening the *saff*. **Secondly**, this *hadith* clearly mentions that Nu'maan bin Basheer (*radhiallahu anhu*) saw the Sahaaba (*radhiallahu anhu*) doing this **PRIOR** to the commencement of the *salah*. There is no mention of this position being maintained even after the *salah* had commenced. Therefore we find that great *muhadditheen* such as Hafiz ibn Hajar (R.A.) and Allama Shawkani (R.A.) have regarded this as an extreme measure

which was occasionally adopted by the Sahaaba (*radhiallahu anhu*) to ensure that the *row* is straight.

In fact, a hadith of Hazrat Anas (*radhiallahu anhu*) makes it absolutely clear that this practice was merely a measure adopted **BEFORE** the *salah* to ensure the straightening of the *row*. He says: "If I had to do that (join the ankles) with anyone of them (the *tabi'een*) today, they would run like wild mules". [*Fath al-Bari,* vol.2, pg.176]

This simply means that the *taabi'een* severely disliked that anybody should join their ankles with them. Several points are understood from this: **Firstly**, Hazrat Anas *(radhiallahu anhu*) had stopped doing this completely. Had this been a *sunnah* and not just a manner of ensuring that the *saff* was straight, it is impossible that Hazrat Anas (*radhiallahu anhu*) would have left it out merely upon somebody disliking it.

Secondly, the *taabi'een* would never have disliked it if they had observed many of the Sahaba (*radhiallahu anhum*) continuously practicing upon this. It was only due to the fact that they had not generally observed the Sahaba (*radhiallahu anhum*) adopting this procedure that they disliked it. Hence this makes it crystal clear that the Sahaba (*radhiallahu anhum*) had only occasionally adopted this practice to ensure the straightening of the *saff*. It was not a *sunnah* in itself, otherwise they would never have left it out.

It has already been made clear that Rasulullah (*sallallahu alaihi wasallam*) never himself instructed the joining of the ankles, nor is there any mention of the Sahaba (*radhiallahu anhum*) having maintained this position even **IN** *salah*. However, if for a moment we do accept that this position must be adopted during the course of the *salah* as well, the question is: In which posture of *salah* must this position be maintained? Must it be maintained during *qiyam, ruku, sajdah* and *qada* or in only some of these postures? If one says that the ankles should be joined only in the *qiyam* posture, on what basis were the other postures excluded? If it is argued that it is difficult to do so in *ruku* and *sajdah*, the same could be said for *qiyam,* since to stand with one's feet spread apart is naturally awkward and hence it presents a certain amount of difficulty and uneasiness for many people. In short, this practice is not established as a *sunnah* of *salah*. It was merely adopted initially by the Sahaba (*radiallahu anhum*) **BEFORE** the commencement of salah to ensure that the rows are straight.

SOURCE : http://themajlis.net/